



Fact Sheet

South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control • www.scdhec.gov

Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever

What Is Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever(RMSF)?	RMSF is a bacterial disease transmitted to people by ticks. The disease has been reported in every state except Hawaii, Vermont, Maine and Alaska.
What are the symptoms?	A person with RMSF may exhibit initial symptoms of fever, nausea, vomiting, severe headache, muscle pain, and lack of appetite anywhere from a few days to a few weeks after being bitten by a tick. Later signs may include rash, abdominal pain, joint pain, and diarrhea. A spotted rash usually breaks out on the wrists, forearms, and ankles two to six days after the onset of fever. However, this characteristic rash is not always present.
How is Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever treated?	Early diagnosis is important in the treatment and prevention of long-term complications. If you have a fever or rash within 4 – 6 weeks after a tick bite, consult your physician for specific RMSF testing. It's important to note on a calendar the date a person was bitten by a tick. Most people can be successfully treated with antibiotics if treatment is begun immediately following a suspicion of a possible infection of RMSF.
How do people catch this disease?	RMSF cannot be transmitted from person to person. Transmission of the bacteria from an infected tick most often occurs after a tick has been attached and feeding for 36 hours.
What can be done to stop the spread of this disease?	<p>Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever is not transmitted from person to person.</p> <p>Ticks live in woods, brushy areas, and areas with tall grass and weeds. Children who play on uncleared land or in brush or weeds should be checked closely at least twice a day, especially in the hair where ticks are hard to see. Adults should also examine themselves after being involved in similar outdoor activities. Ticks must be removed as soon as possible to prevent the transmission of possible disease pathogens. Bathe or shower and shampoo hair after outdoor activities to prevent the attachment of ticks.</p> <p>If found, ticks should be pulled out with tweezers or with fingers covered by a piece of tissue or paper towel. Ticks should not be jerked or twisted, but pulled out with a steady motion. The use of heat, solvents, nail polish, Vaseline or other material to cause the tick to release is not advised. Antiseptic should be applied to the bite area and hands washed with soap and water. Remember to mark the date on your calendar that the tick was found.</p> <p>General precautions can help prevent tick bites. These include using an insect repellent that can be sprayed on clothes as well as a repellent that can be used on exposed skin. Follow label directions and use extra precautions for children. Other precautions include wearing protective, light-colored clothing tucked in around the ankles and waist, keeping weeds and tall grass cut, and avoiding tick-infested places such as grassy and marshy woodland areas when possible. Stay in the center of paths when hiking or walking through woods.</p> <p>Pets should be checked for ticks at least once a week, and tick collars, shampoos and other tick repellents are recommended. Oral and topical medications are also available from veterinarians.</p>

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL

Region 7

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